

## Introduction

Some time ago, I set out to adapt *Macbeth* for the screen and spent months dissecting the text, grappling with every line and word. While contemplating both the opening (the witches' prophecy) and the conclusion (Malcolm's ascent as king), I was struck by a realization: *Macbeth* is unfinished. The prophecy which initiates the play's action proclaims that Macbeth will first be king, and then that Banquo's children will be kings. Macbeth indeed becomes Scotland's king—and yet Banquo's prophecy remains unfulfilled. The play ends, oddly, with Banquo's seed nowhere in sight, and with a third party, Malcolm, ascending to the throne.

One might argue that not all of the witches' prophecies were meant to come to pass. Yet throughout *Macbeth*, the witches' other prophecies, no matter how twisted, are all fulfilled on stage (even Birnam Wood manages to "move" as they predict). One might argue that Banquo's prophecy is insignificant, a mere historical footnote in the play. Yet if this were the case, why would Shakespeare go to such lengths to dramatize a scene in which Banquo is murdered and his child, Fleance, escapes (thus leaving the door open for his future ascent)? The prophecy regarding Banquo's child is, in fact, ubiquitous in the play, as Macbeth dwells obsessively on the ascent of "the seed of Banquo." Indeed, the very reason Macbeth cannot find peace as king is because his mind is fixated on the moment when Banquo's prophecy will come to pass, when Banquo's seed will take his throne.

One might, then, try to dismiss all of this as merely an oversight by Shakespeare, argue that he simply forgot to resolve this particular plot line in the play. But would the greatest of English dramatists, who was careful with every syllable, actually neglect to resolve an entire subplot, indeed, the very driving action of his play? If not, then did he have something else in mind? Could he have been preparing for a *Macbeth, Part II*?

Struck by this possibility, I went back and reanalyzed the text of *Macbeth*, looking for any other clues that might point to Shakespeare's preparing a sequel. I was shocked to discover two more compelling pieces of evidence. The first appears in Lady Macbeth's famous monologue: "I have given suck and know/How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me." In this line, she tells us that she has a child. But then where is the child Macbeth? Why is he/she omitted from the play? Is the only child of a king and queen, the sole heir to the throne, so insignificant as to not merit any other mention?

The other hint came in the character of Prince Donalbain (Malcolm's brother). After their father, Duncan, is murdered by Macbeth, the two princes, both legitimately in line for the throne, agree to flee for safety's sake in two directions: Malcolm, to England; Donalbain, to Ireland. Yet when Malcolm returns to oust Macbeth, Donalbain, oddly, does not join him. And when Malcolm ascends to the throne at the play's end, his prince brother is nowhere in sight. Why would Shakespeare keep Donalbain in Ireland? And why end *Macbeth* on this note?

Was Shakespeare thrice careless? Or could the playwright known for multipart plays (*Henry IV, Part I and II, Henry VI, Part I, II and III*), have also had in mind a *Macbeth, Part II*?

The concept haunted me. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that these plot elements were substantial enough to justify a play in their own right: an unfulfilled prophecy; a child Macbeth; a boy destined to be king; the princely Donalbain suspiciously in Ireland while his brother sits on the Scottish throne; the newly crowned Malcolm, the bereft Macduff, the devious Seyton. And, of course, the three witches. They are, in fact, among a very rare group of villains whom Shakespeare leaves to live another day.

I pondered what medium could best suit such a sequel. I could not envision a sequel to *Macbeth* written in contemporary English, or in the form of a novel. Too much would be lost in the conversion process; it would become something else. Any attempt at a sequel, I felt, should be as true to its Shakespearean model as possible. I concluded that it should appear in the same form as *Macbeth*: as a play, in the traditional Shakespearean five-act structure, in Elizabethan English, and in blank verse.

It obviously took much more deliberation before I could summon the resolve to go forth. Despite my enthusiasm for the concept, I had an enormously hard time with the idea of approaching Shakespeare's work. It felt like sacrilege. Then I thought long and hard of Shakespeare's life, and realized that when he himself—a slightly-educated, minor actor—attempted to write a play, he was excoriated, brandished an “upstart crow,” criticized for even daring to attempt to write in blank verse (supposedly to be reserved only for those with a university education). As Ben Johnson said, “he knew little Latin, and less Greek.”

But this was precisely his virtue. Shakespeare was not a scholar, and he did not write for the academic elite. He was of the people. Undeterred by the rigid societal

pressure of “what should be” and “what shouldn’t be,” he followed what was, for him, a more important route: pursuing his artistic vision with fervor, whatever the consequence. Qualified or not, he jumped in and attempted something brash. I think that Shakespeare (as both actor and writer) would, with a wink, be the first to encourage someone to attempt a *Macbeth, Part II*.

*The Tragedy of Macbeth, Part II* is not a scholarly endeavor; it is an artistic one, meant both to pick up where *Macbeth* left off and to stand as a complete play in its own right. (It would be helpful to read *Macbeth* in advance, but not necessary.) It is my hope that it be enjoyed by actors, directors, and theater companies eager to grapple with a new text, to play new roles, and by theatergoers eager to watch them. So many people around the world love the cadences of blank verse. Yet there has been scarce new material for 400 years.

I think it’s time we gave them something.

*THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH, PART II:*

*The Seed of Banquo*

*Noah Lukeman*

For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;  
For *them* the gracious Duncan have I murder'd . . .  
Only for them . . .  
To make *them* kings, the seed of Banquo kings!  
--*Macbeth*

Year: 1060

*Dramatis Personae*

*Malcolm*  
*Macduff*  
*Seyton*  
*Siward*  
*Lennox*  
*Angus*  
*Ross*  
*Donalbain*  
*Fleance*  
*Candor*  
*Lady Malcolm*  
*Nurse*  
*Fiona*  
*Syna*  
*Doctor*  
*Porter*  
*Three Witches*  
*Three Murderers*  
*Two Petitioners*  
*Suitor*  
*Suitor's Father*  
*Two Guards*  
*Six Crowd Members*  
*Attendants*  
*Messengers*  
*Ghost of Macbeth*  
*Ghost of Banquo*

*ACT I*

## SCENE 1

*Heath at sunset.*

*Enter three witches.*

## FIRST WITCH

Now that we three meet again,  
No thunder, lightning, absent rain.

## SECOND WITCH

No wars that rage, no plague that spreads,  
no envied crown, no sleepless beds.

## THIRD WITCH

The hurly-burly now is done,  
the battle has been lost and won.

## ALL

Sink down, now, the setting sun.

## FIRST WITCH

Invite a fog, let it rise,  
bring for Malcolm slow demise.

## SECOND WITCH

A lizard's eye, a drop of sage,  
lend this Malcolm baseless rage.

## THIRD WITCH

A tiger's claw, berries tart,  
seal this king a blackened heart.

## FIRST WITCH

An eagle's spine, a cup of sand,  
spark new wars throughout the land.

## ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair,  
Hover in fog and filthy air.

*Exeunt.*

## SCENE 2

*Dunsinane.**Malcolm, seated, with Attendants.**Enter Macduff, Seyton, Siward, Lennox, Angus and Attendants.*

ALL

God save the King!

MALCOLM

Welcome, dear counsel. But why such haste?

LENNOX

My liege,

 a band of men has formed about Fleance.

ANGUS

They head for the sea.

SEYTON

'Tis a dangerous mob,

 and it will swell before it touches the shore.

MALCOLM

Fleance then rebuffed our invitation?

LENNOX

He said he would ne'er again grace the walls  
of Dunsinane.

SEYTON

'Tis a sharp rebuke,  
the prologue to some greater action. We must  
strike now, before this worm becomes a snake.

MALCOLM

Macduff, you are silent.

MACDUFF

Forgive, my lord. It is  
my language since the murder of the ones  
I loved.

MALCOLM

Shall we strike Fleance?

MACDUFF

No, my lord.

SEYTON

Traitor!

*Macduff draws.*

MACDUFF

This sword will take your head as swift as took  
it Macbeth's.

MALCOLM

Stay, Macduff. Seyton, allow his speech.

MACDUFF

Fleance's gathering is but a few dozen souls.  
They pose no threat to your great throne. They head  
away from Dunsinane, not towards.

SEYTON

In order to regroup

on some other shore.

MACDUFF

You are a mighty  
king, my liege. You have no reason to fear  
an absconding boy.

SEYTON

This boy is now a man,  
and thinks manly thoughts.

MACDUFF

Shall Scotland see  
a king grown so uncertain of his throne  
that he'd unleash an army 'gainst a pack

of men?

SEYTON

Shall Scotland watch a king afraid  
to stop rebellion in his midst?

*A cheer.*

MALCOLM

What noise is that outside my window?

ANGUS

A throng  
has camped to celebrate your reign. Tis ten  
years today since your ascent.

MALCOLM

Is it today? Then this day also marks  
the anniversary of Macbeth's fall.  
O, two-headed day! God has graced  
us with ten quiet years. Scotland thrives;  
Norway dares not attack; and the reign  
of the Macbeths doth fade from memory.  
The land now lies content, except in its need  
of an heir, which I will soon provide. Stalk  
Fleance; but do not attack. No crime  
has he committed. Graver the danger that I  
become the likeness of Macbeth than that  
a boy-man dream of breaching Dunsinane.

SEYTON

My lord,  
the danger lies not in Fleance's present strength;  
it lies in the prophecy that he, not you,  
shall inherit Scotland's throne.

MALCOLM

Let us declare our days of prophecy  
concluded. Scotland has prospered without such dark  
omens, and the witches' words have proved false.

SEYTON

But, my liege—

MALCOLM

I have spoken.

*Enter Ross.*

ROSS

God save the King.

MALCOLM

What news from Ireland?

How fares my dear brother?

ROSS

News which shames  
me to report, my lord. A massive army  
forms 'round Donalbain.

MALCOLM

For what purpose?

ROSS

I know not, and thus urge temperance.  
Yet, a host of ships rests on their shore,  
and they all point towards Scotland.

SIWARD

What!

SEYTON

Traitor!

LENNOX

Villain!

MALCOLM

Even so?

ROSS

We do not know  
their purpose, my lord.

MACDUFF

Ships set on a shore  
do not in themselves prove ill intent.

SIWARD

What other intent could there be?

LENNOX

If peaceful,

he would have forewarned.

MACDUFF

Perhaps it was gathered in haste.

SEYTON

In haste to conquer Dunsinane. You would have Donalbain's army pounding on our gates and still wonder at his intent.

MALCOLM

Enough! Are not my brother and I two halves of one same Duncan? I cannot imagine he aims for my throne.

MACDUFF

He is a noble soul,

kind, valiant, honest.

MALCOLM

Yet, 'tis strange

he never returned to Scotland.

SEYTON

But 'tis not,

my lord: for if your brother was devoid of princely ambition, surely he would have returned, as one brother to another, to the land of his birth. If he lacked the lust for power, he would have warned of his intent—indeed, would not have massed such arms. The truest villain will not reveal himself until the moment meet for his desire—and for this the truest will wait a lifetime.

MALCOLM

Proceed to Ireland, noble Ross. Tell my brother to return to Scotland at once, alone, so that I may interrogate his intent.

*Exit Ross.*

SEYTON

It is a fool's errand, my lord. He will return, but with men in tow. We must prepare a defense, not grant him time to launch.

MALCOLM

I have spoken. Go to.

*Exeunt.*

MALCOLM

Macduff?

*Macduff remains.*

MALCOLM

You knew my brother well. What do you see in this?

MACDUFF

No foul purpose. Except in Seyton.  
He sees in your brother what he hides in himself.

*Exit Macduff.*

MALCOLM

O Donalbain! In these halls of flatterers,  
a brother's love is what I long for most—  
yet what, as king, I am least safe to have.  
If the witches had foretold that I'd  
be king, then would there still sit such unrest?  
Are not ten years enough to kill the flame  
of speculation? . . . Not even in myself.  
As king, I mock their prophecy; as man  
and witness, I cannot forget. I do  
fear Fleance, but that I do my men  
can never know; I do suspect Donalbain,  
Seyton and Siward have lately grown too bold;  
and Norway is not as still as I pretend.  
O, unstable anniversary!  
I am enthroned by right, but not by fate—  
and fate is yet the stronger of the two.  
Why then, I shall challenge fate.  
What's done can be undone; what's proclaimed,  
proclaimed again. What better way to quench

a prophecy than with another?  
I shall find the witches, and if by right  
am I king, what prophecy can form  
but one triumphant, filled with omens fair?  
Fleance, I need not net you with my men--  
old ladies' words will do the work as well.  
What they've spun for you, they'll spin for me.  
Head I there with alacrity.

*Exit Malcolm.*

## SCENE 3

*Witches' place.*

*Enter Malcolm.*

MALCOLM

This mist of hell confounds. Swore I the hags  
lived in this place; yet days of searching bear  
no fruit. Perchance times of prophecy  
have long since concluded.

*Enter three witches.*

FIRST WITCH

Hail to thee, King of Scotland!

SECOND WITCH

Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH

Hail to thee, master of Macbeth!

MALCOLM

Can it be? Hear me, sisters. I have come—

FIRST WITCH

You speak when you should listen.

SECOND WITCH

You listen but hear not.

THIRD WITCH

You look but see not.

MALCOLM

Do not declaim in riddles. I beseech, if nights  
of prophecy have not been stopped,  
then I, as king, command: lend me your clouded  
vision and ope my fate. O agents of darkness!  
Grant me a prophecy to slay Macbeth's.

Speak for me a future, one greater, yet  
more permanent; one grander yet more secure.

ALL

Triple, triple, toil and trouble,  
fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

FIRST WITCH

Look to Ireland; from there will hail  
your sorrows. An army shall your brother march  
through the shades of Birnam Wood.

SECOND WITCH

Look to the black church: you will love Macbeth,  
and love in marriage will divide.

THIRD WITCH

No man can kill you but Cawdor.

MALCOLM

Stay, imperfect speakers! Stay!  
Pronounce more clearly! I demand!

*Witches vanish.*

MALCOLM

They have sunk again into the bog;  
yet their evil residue remains.  
O Donalbain! Would you march a troop  
'gainst your other half? I will prepare.  
A black church? Love Macbeth? Nonsense—  
I cannot love a ghost. None can kill  
me but Cawdor. There is the heart of it.  
For I alone am Cawdor—and I shall not  
attack my self. Thus am I secure  
in what can never be. So, Banquo,  
you were wrong: your seed shall not sow kings.  
I alone am king!

*Exit Malcolm.*